

IN THE CLAIMS

This is a complete and current listing of the claims, marked with status identifiers in parentheses. The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A method of pasteurising and vacuum packing food ~~(2)~~, comprising ~~the following steps:~~

placing the food ~~(2)~~ on a tray ~~(1)~~ having a flexible bottom ~~(7)~~ and stiff lateral walls ~~(8)~~ extending in the vertical direction of the tray ~~(1)~~, up to a filling degree of 40-60% of the maximum volume of the tray ~~(1)~~;

covering the tray ~~(1)~~ with a flexible cover layer ~~(3)~~ to form a package ~~(5)~~;

providing a one-way valve ~~(4)~~ for one-directional communication from the interior of the package ~~(5)~~ to the exterior thereof;

pasteurising the contents inside the package ~~(5)~~ thus formed by ~~means~~ way of microwaves; and

closing the valve ~~(4)~~ upon completed pasteurisation of the package and cooling the package ~~(5)~~, ~~whereby~~ a vacuum ~~is being~~ created in the package ~~(5)~~ in such a manner that the package ~~(5)~~ with the vacuum-packaged food ~~(2)~~ therein presents a centre portion where the distance between said flexible cover layer ~~(3)~~ and said bottom ~~(7)~~ is shorter than the

distance between said flexible cover layer ~~(3)~~ and said bottom ~~(7)~~ at the peripheral edges of the package.

2. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the one-way valve ~~(4)~~ is arranged on said flexible cover layer ~~(3)~~.

3. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein said one-way valve ~~(4)~~ is applied on said flexible cover layer ~~(3)~~ during the step of covering said tray ~~(1)~~ with the flexible cover ~~(3)~~.

4. (Currently Amended) A method as claimed in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein said food ~~(2)~~ includes all ingredients necessary for a ready-to-eat dish.

5. (Currently Amended) A package ~~(5)~~ for use in a method of pasteurisation and vacuum-packing food ~~(2)~~, said method comprising ~~the steps~~ placing the food on a tray ~~(1)~~ up to a filling degree of 40-60% of the maximum volume of the tray ~~(1)~~, covering the tray ~~(1)~~ with a flexible cover layer ~~(3)~~, providing one-way valve ~~(4)~~ for one-directional communication from the interior of the package ~~(5)~~ to the exterior thereof, pasteurising the contents inside the package ~~(5)~~ thus formed by ~~means~~ way of microwaves, closing the valve ~~(4)~~ upon completed pasteurisation of the package ~~(5)~~ and cooling the

package ~~(5)~~, whereby a vacuum is being created in the package ~~(5)~~, characterised in that and the tray ~~(1)~~ has including a flexible bottom and rigid lateral walls ~~(8)~~ extending in the vertical direction of the tray ~~(1)~~, said package ~~(5)~~ with vacuum-packaged food ~~(2)~~ contained therein presenting a centre portion, where the distance between said flexible cover layer ~~(3)~~ and said bottom ~~(7)~~ is shorter than the distance between said flexible cover layer ~~(3)~~ and said bottom ~~(7)~~ at the peripheral edges of the package ~~(5)~~.

6. (Currently Amended) A package ~~(5)~~ as claimed in claim 5, wherein the bottom ~~(7)~~ of said tray ~~(1)~~ has a convex shape as seen from below, when the pressure inside the package ~~(5)~~ exceeds or equals the pressure exteriorly thereof.

7. (Currently Amended) A package ~~(5)~~ as claimed in ~~any one of claims 5 and 6~~ claim 5, wherein the bottom ~~(7)~~ of the tray ~~(1)~~ is formed with a section ~~(14)~~ that is spaced from the periphery of the bottom, which is essentially flat.

8. (Currently Amended) A package ~~(5)~~ as claimed in claim 7, wherein said section ~~(14)~~ forms more than 40% of the total area of the bottom ~~(7)~~.

9. (Currently Amended) A package ~~(5)~~ as claimed in ~~any one of claims 5-8~~ claim 5, wherein the valve ~~(4)~~ is arranged on

said flexible cover layer ~~(3)~~.

10. (Currently Amended) A package ~~(5)~~ as claimed in claim 9, wherein said valve ~~(4)~~ ~~consists of~~ includes a slit formed in said flexible cover layer ~~(3)~~ and of a reclosable adhesive film ~~(6)~~ extending across the slit.

11. (Currently Amended) A package ~~(5)~~ as claimed in ~~any one of claims 5-10~~ claim 5, wherein the valve ~~(4)~~ is arranged to emit a sound signal when vapour is flowing through said valve.

12. (Currently Amended) A package ~~(5)~~ as claimed in ~~any one of claims 5-8~~ claim 5, wherein the tray part located at the periphery of the bottom ~~(7)~~ extends at an angle to the direction of extension of the tray.

13. (New) A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein said food includes all ingredients necessary for a ready-to-eat dish.

14. (New) A method as claimed in claim 3, wherein said food includes all ingredients necessary for a ready-to-eat dish.

15. (New) A package as claimed in claim 6, wherein the bottom of the tray is formed with a section that is spaced

from the periphery of the bottom, which is essentially flat.

16. (New) A package as claimed in claim 8, wherein the valve is arranged on said flexible cover layer.

17. (New) A package as claimed in claim 16, wherein said valve includes a slit formed in said flexible cover layer and of a reclosable adhesive film extending across the slit.

18. (New) A package as claimed in claim 17, wherein the valve is arranged to emit a sound signal when vapour is flowing through said valve.

19. (New) A package as claimed in claim 6, wherein the tray part located at the periphery of the bottom extends at an angle to the direction of extension of the tray.

20. (New) A package as claimed in claim 7, wherein the tray part located at the periphery of the bottom extends at an angle to the direction of extension of the tray.